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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 3541  
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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 3353  
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0934  
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4480  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 6427  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 8944  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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[1](#)1. Final Winograd Report

[1](#)2. Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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All major media led with the political situation on the eve of the

publication of the final Winograd report. Ha'aretz and other media quoted associates of PM Ehud Olmert as saying on Monday that he has no intention of scheduling early elections. The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that Olmert took steps to reinforce his coalition by issuing reassuring statements to Kadima, Labor, and Shas MKs in a speech to the Kadima faction. Yediot quoted Olmert associates as saying that Defense Minister Ehud Barak may resign, but that Kadima will not set a date for early elections. Maariv reported that associates of Olmert and Barak are placing responsibility for the government's future at one another's feet. Maariv cited an assessment within the Labor Party that Barak will act to advance the elections.

Israel Radio reported that in his State of the Union Address, President Bush reaffirmed his support for a two-state solution and his determination not to let Iran acquire nuclear weapons.

Israel Radio reported that Israel will try to share control of the Rafah border with Egypt. Media reported that Hamas refuses to let the PA share control of the border. Maariv reported that Hamas told Egypt that it will return control to Egypt if it opens the Rafah crossing. Yediot and other media reported that Egypt has asked Israel to help resolve the Rafah crisis, saying that it will seal the border by the end of the week and that Israel should accept European observers and the transfer of responsibility to the PA. The Jerusalem Post quoted the EU foreign ministers as saying on Monday that the EU would "consider resuming its monitoring mission at Rafah." Leading media reported that Hamas stressed its opposition to allowing the PA to control the border. Major media reported that Iran announced on Monday that it will soon renew its diplomatic ties with Egypt.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that U.S. Roadmap monitor Lt. Gen. William Fraser launched his mission on Monday.

Ha'aretz reported that Democratic presidential contender Sen. Barack Obama told Israeli reporters and the American Jewish press that a "constant virulent campaign" was being waged against him, that Jews have nothing to fear from him, and that there is no substance to allegations that he is a Muslim who does not swear allegiance to the U.S. Obama was also quoted as saying that he believes in Israel "as a Jewish state," that he does not accept that a right of return for Palestinians can be interpreted "in any literal way," that he opposes talks with Hamas as long as the Islamist organization refuses to recognize Israel, and that he believes in a two state solution for two nations, but only as long as Israel has "security" that the Palestinians will not only sign on to in a final agreement, but also actualize.

Maariv reported that the Mauritanian opposition is applying strong pressure to its government to revoke its ties with Israel because of the Gaza crisis.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a new, state-authorized radio station catering to West Bank settlers could be established somewhere in the West Bank as early in April, unless a pending High Court petition torpedoes the move.

All media reported that on Monday the High Court of Justice sentenced Omri Sharon, the former PM's son, to seven months imprisonment. Sharon, a former Knesset member, was convicted of concealing illegal contributions from secret donors to his father's 1999 campaign for the chairmanship of the Likud Party.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yona Metzger as saying in an interview with the British weekly The Jewish News that hardships suffered by the Palestinians in Gaza should be resolved by setting up a state for them in the Sinai. Metzger was also quoted as saying that while peaceable Arabs should be allowed to pray in Jerusalem mosques, they should recognize that Jerusalem belongs to the Jews.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday four Israeli-Arab Knesset members attended the funeral of George Habash, the founder of the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), outside Amman.

Israel Radio reported that based on the invitation of Knesset

Speaker Dalia Itzik, German FM Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy will both address the Knesset in honor of Israel's 60th anniversary celebrations.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday MK Benny Elon, Chairman of the Knesset's Science and Technology Committee, told members of a NASA delegation visiting Israel that Israel would like to send another astronaut to participate in a NASA expedition.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Joshua Fund, an American evangelical organization, has decided to "adopt" Barzilai Medical Center (hospital) in Ashkelon. The fund aims to invest at least \$1.2 million in humanitarian relief over the next year for Israeli, Lebanese, and Palestinians families devastated by war and terrorism.

Ha'aretz reported that renowned Israeli author David Grossman was awarded an honorary doctorate in international literature by the University of Florence in a ceremony held on Sunday to coincide with European Holocaust Day.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that Israeli companies listed on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE) will now be able to automatically register for trading on the pan-European Euronext stock exchange in Paris.

Leading media reported on the upcoming visits to Israel of Cisco Chairman John Chambers and Dr. Jacob Richter, a member of the senior management of Juniper Networks.

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1. Final Winograd Report:  
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Summary:  
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Veteran journalist Hemmi Shalev wrote on page one of the independent Israel Hayom: "One could receive the impression that the final stages of the war in Lebanon were a masterpiece that the Prime Minister conducted as if he were a statesman on the order of at least Napoleon and Montgomery -- and not that this was a bitter, hasty and superfluous battle that took the lives of dozens needlessly. Olmert's spin masters are now counting on this."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "If the [Winograd] report's tone ... leads clearly to the conclusion that Olmert must go home, everything will change. On the other hand, if it is lukewarm ... [Olmert] will be able to breathe easy."

Block Quotes:  
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I. "This Should Have Ended Long Ago"

Veteran journalist Hemmi Shalev wrote on page one of the independent Israel Hayom (1/29): "It would be hard to describe a harsher or more blatant or graver or more unequivocal indictment against the Prime Minister than the one submitted last April-- and it is hard to think of a final and summary synopsis that will not be viewed now as a disappointing anticlimax.... The long waiting period wracked the nerves of the political establishment and weakened the judgment of the media, and now, on the last lap, everyone is firing all their ammunition from all their guns and in every venue, and the spins and the speculations are flying as if there were no tomorrow. This is so extreme, that from some of the reports on the war's final days, one could receive the impression that the final stages of the war in Lebanon were a masterpiece that the Prime Minister conducted as if he were a statesman on the order of at least Napoleon and Montgomery -- and not that this was a bitter, hasty and superfluous battle that took the lives of dozens needlessly. Olmert's spin masters are now counting on this."

## II. "Preoccupied"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (1/29): "The statements of Judge Eliyahu Winograd, which will echo at six o'clock on Wednesday evening in Jerusalem's International Convention Center, will shuffle the cards -- this way, or that way. If the report's tone is harsh, unequivocal, obvious, and leads clearly to the conclusion that Olmert must go home, everything will change. On the other hand, if it is lukewarm, focuses on the army and levels reasonable criticism at the Prime Minister while mentioning the process of learning lessons and reconstruction, he will be able to breathe easy. Judge Winograd's body language, statements, the terms he uses, the commentary, the headlines that spread in their wake, and the public response will all decide the fate of Olmert's government this week, for good or ill. The way it looks now, good is in the lead."

### 12. Mideast:

#### Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "The decision to build a border fence ... is not about a particular crisis, but the fulfillment of a basic long-term need."

Gershon Baskin, Co-Director of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "(The)new reality, which is far from desirable from an Israeli point of view, could be turned around in Israel's favor."

Liberal columnist Gadi Taub wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "The simultaneous use of an aggressive policy, both toward the illegal outposts as well as toward those who fire Qassam rockets, will make it clear that the laws of policy, not of gangs, apply to this conflict."

#### Block Quotes:

### 11. "Time for Hourglass"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (1/29): "In 2005, just before Israel withdrew unilaterally from Gaza ... then deputy IDF chief of staff Moshe Kaplinsky drew up a plan to build a proper barrier along the international (Israel/Egypt) border. The plan was called Project Hourglass. Back then, Hourglass was estimated to cost \$1.5 billion. That is a lot of money, but as has been seen with the security fence in Judea and Samaria (i.e. the West Bank), even a partial barrier can be a major asset in preventing the infiltration of terrorists and catching them if they do.... The border with Egypt is not a temporary one, nor is it in dispute. As the U.S. is discovering regarding its border with Mexico, even peaceful borders often need to be fenced off in order for nations to exercise their sovereignty and determine who may enter. The decision to build a border fence, accordingly, is not about a particular crisis, but the fulfillment of a basic long-term need. This need existed before Gaza fell to Hamas, and it will exist even if the threat from Hamas is removed. It is an investment worth making now that will benefit the nation far into the future."

## II. "The Prospect of a New Gaza Reality"

Gershon Baskin, Co-Director of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), wrote in The Jerusalem Post (1/29): "(The)new reality, which is far from desirable from an Israeli point of view, could be turned around in Israel's favor. Recognizing that the smuggling of people, money, and weapons have been taking place under the Gaza/Egypt border for years, even when Israel fully occupied Gaza, the new reality brings that smuggling

above ground and adds the possibility that Egypt will station border inspectors on the Egyptian side of Rafah. Furthermore, it is possible to renegotiate the agreement with the European Union on the stationing of EU monitors on the border. It could be possible to move those EU monitors to the Egyptian side of the border, which would remove any Israeli control over the monitors' movement and enable at least some form of third-party supervision over the border. The most obvious advantage for Israel, and probably for Gaza as well, is if the new arrangements enable the Gaza border to remain open and Israel to wash its hands of Gaza entirely. Israel would be able to claim that it is no longer responsible for the welfare of the Palestinian people of Gaza.... While taking these bold steps, Israel could offer the Palestinians in Gaza a cease-fire arrangement that the Hamas leadership has been trying to achieve without success."

### III. "The Whining Cossacks"

Liberal columnist Gadi Taub wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (1/29): "In the settlements, as in Gaza, the mentality of the robbed Cossack comes to the fore: Beat and cry; shoot and also whine that you are the victim. In both cases the government can restore the principle of responsibility: Those who fire will be considered responsible, and not be considered victims. The simultaneous use of an aggressive policy, both toward the illegal outposts as well as toward those who fire Qassam rockets, will make it clear that the laws of policy, not of gangs, apply to this conflict. Israel is not picking on the Palestinians, but rather demanding insistence on the outline whose goal is to divide the land, and in the long term -- peace."

MORENO